

Southeast Arkansas Rewarding Youth Achievement Program

Profile of Partners: RYA is operated by Phoenix Youth & Family Services (Phoenix), which is the Subcontractor of Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District (SEAEDD) for the operation of the Youth Opportunity Movement. SEAEDD is the grant recipient and administrative entity.

Area Served: The target area for the RYA grant is Chicot and Desha counties in Southeast Arkansas, covering seven school districts with an estimated enrollment of 5500. The total population estimate for the two counties is under 30,000. The area's poverty level is three times below the national level with 36% of all persons being at or below poverty level. Rural in nature, the area has no main urban center, a severe lack of transportation and career-oriented opportunities, and long distances to the nearest university, shopping mall, movie theatre, and other recreational activities. The majority of all activities are taking place outside of these two counties.

Profile of Participants/Outcomes: The overwhelming majority (75%) of RYA participants are female. 64% of the participants are over 16 years of age. African Americans number 84% of all participants.

Total number of Students served: 282 (123 in 2001, 159 in 2002)

Students returning to high school: 72

Students entering post-secondary: 41

ACT prep and ongoing tutoring have increased students grades in the math and science area

Success Stories:

Participants have taken college tours and recently returned from a 6 college tour that captured career development, cultural diversity and recreation. Several RYA participants have experienced recent success: Jermaine Carroll will travel to Tampa, Florida for the Video Presentation Workshop to present his video to the 3rd Year Opportunity Grant Workshop. Lee Brown and Chiquita Bailey were chosen to serve on the Arkansas Governor's Youth Board for Arkansas for Drug Free Youth. This selection was based on leadership skills, academic grade point and being an 11th grade student. Joseph Fortenberry attended a National Youth Leadership Forum on Defense Intelligence in Washington, D.C., in February 2002. He was chosen based on high academics and having a career interest that was related to that of National Security and Foreign Affairs.

Profile of Services for Youth

Enriched Summer Experience: Summer internships/work experience through various agencies, businesses, and organizations in the named counties. Youth worked 40 hours during the summer 6-week program and are currently working up to 15 hours on existing jobs from the summer internships providing they are currently enrolled in school.

Math and Science Enhancement: math and science enrichment was provided for 6 hours at each site this summer with the remaining 2 hours in English enrichment.

Year round activities: These includes mentoring, tutoring, ACT Prep, college prep, career assessment, leadership development and work experiences/internships.

College Bound assistance: 46 students toured 6 colleges in Tennessee and Georgia, They learned about financial assistance and explorations for summer camps. Several participants are currently enrolled in a Freshmen English Comp I at the University of Arkansas-Monticello, the closest university to the target counties.

Roles of Partners

- Linkages to existing programs: There is a continued collaboration with the 21st Century Community Learning Center in one of the named counties that offer the after-school tutorial program. There are several participants that are Upward Bound students who participate and attend at the local university. Participants are allowed the opportunity to work up to 15 hours as a school-to-work transition program.
- Private/Public Sector Commitments
Commitments in job placements from the private sector have been very rewarding. Placements include medical/pharmaceutical fields, banking, accounting firms, law firms, courthouses, insurance companies, floral shops, tax professional office, newspaper publishing, Boys/Girls Club, public schools, daycare centers, nursing homes, 21st Century-Tutorial program, veterinary clinics, flying services and graphic design industry.
- Secondary/Post-secondary Commitments
The nearest post secondary schools in the area are within a 40-50 mile radius of the named counties. The Great Rivers Technical Institute is located within the target area. Additional linkages and commitments will include collaborations with local community colleges to provide math instructions for the summer program, summer camps at various universities.

Keys Elements in Program's Success:

- Having the opportunity to provide career placements according to youth's career choice that gives employees free labor but yet engaging youth with knowledge and hands-on experience with a very good salary.
- Giving students an opportunity to begin their college transcript by allowing them to take a college credit course while in high school
- Summer Enrichment courses that prepared students for entrance into college or accelerated courses in high school.
- Providing Leadership skill classes and Job Readiness training before entering career placement.

- Support of staff to help maintain self-confidence and leadership abilities of participants by providing community service project to their communities that seem to be small but yet meaningful at heart.

Contact: Arlicia Thompson, phoenixrya@cei.net, 870/222-2808